

3W/3M

"Merger"

by

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DRAFT THREE

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SCENE ONE: OPENING ACTS

PAGE 1 - (6 PANELS)

NOTE: As you'll see, we will be returning to this montage for the final page, so you may want to compose things a little on the tighter side here in order to allow room for what's to come.

Panel 1 - On PHILIPPI ROUEN. He is in his late forties, with a burly build, a very slight slouch, and the tousled hair of a Roman emperor. He wears the Highmaster robe and stole with a color-coordinated cravat. We are in the foyer of his living quarters. He stares off into space, bored.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - Outside. ROUEN is stepping into the backseat of a long, land-based vehicle, the Ordo version of a limousine. It's all sleek, flat surfaces with an ornate trim, giving the transport occasional gilded-age flourishes.

Rouen's brow is a little furrowed. He's deep within his own head.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 3 - Wide. In the midst of a fancy looking soirée, ROUEN holds a glass of wine and is the center of attention. His mouth is open as he tells an anecdote, though he looks a little distracted. Several other IMPORTANT-LOOKING GUESTS are rapt, looking on with admiration, amusement, and interest.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 4 - Morning in Rouen's beautiful office at Institute Prime. The sun shines in from the circular, floor-to-ceiling windows, gleaming on the flat work surfaces and ornate, cushioned chairs.

ROUEN is entering with purpose. "Let's get down to business."

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 5 - ROUEN, seated behind his desk, addresses his assistant ATHENA.

Athena is studious-looking. Twenty-ish years younger than Rouen, she dresses in austere business attire: high-wasted, straight-legged pants, collared shirt, and flowing wrap. She is always holding a glowing tablet.

ROUEN

Athena, let us execute that security project.

ATHENA

Yes, of course.

Panel 6 - Close up on ROUEN. He sits back in his chair with a wry smile, satisfied.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE 2 - (4 PANELS)

Panel 1 - LARGE PANEL. On GADSHILL. He is a little older than Rouen, but with a more sculpted build, much thinner hair and a distinctly different nose. He is on stage, with spotlights on him, submerged in a large, translucent tank of liquid. He has an expression of extreme concentration. His arms and legs are bound to each corner of the tank, completely covered by chunky shackling apparatuses. This device looks scary and intense. Bubbles flow from his mouth.

In the foreground, mostly in shadow, we see the backs of several RICH AUDIENCE MEMBERS; enough to indicate that this is a performance.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - On THE WEALTHY CROWD. In semi-darkness, they all stare up at the stage with expressions that are varying degrees of admiring, entertained, concerned, and horrified.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 3 - Close on GADSHILL, in profile. More bubbles. His head is tucked forward and down, muscles flexing in the extreme as he struggles. One arm is free. In his hand, a very tiny lock pick.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 4 - Close on ROUEN and ATHENA, sitting in the midst of the crowd. Both of their gazes remain fixed on the stage as he whispers into her ear.

ROUEN

(microscopically tiny)
Let's have you invite this chappy to meet with me tomorrow.

Assuming he survives, naturally.

PAGE 3 - (4 PANELS)

Panel 1 - GADSHILL escapes! He thrusts his head out of the water, his mouth open wide.

GADSHILL
GASPPPPPP!

Panel 2 - At left, seated, ROUEN smirks and claps politely with restraint. At right, ATHENA stands amidst the crowd, stooping slightly to stay out of the sight-lines of the rest of THE AUDIENCE, who stand to applaud and cheer rapturously.

CROWD
Bravo! Fantastic! Gadshill!

Panel 3 - We're backstage at the open door to the dressing room. In the foreground, ATHENA stands before GADSHILL, now in a towel, his hair still damp, standing with a slouch.

In the background stands three other Eskapi: an older male and two women.

NOTE: These three are described in more detail in Scene Four.

GADSHILL
Hello?

ATHENA
Good evening, Mr. Gadshill...

Panel 4 - BIG PANEL. ROUEN stands smiling, an arm extended towards the viewer, framed by the doorway of his office. Behind him we see a bit of his luxurious workspace, as light streams in behind him. ATHENA stands outside of the office.

CAPTION
"...what are your plans for tomorrow morning?"

ROUEN
Welcome, welcome! I am, of course, Philippi Rouen, Highmaster-- a zealous enthusiast of this man who stands before me.

PAGE 4 - (5 PANELS)

Panel 1 - On GADSHILL. He is neatly coifed and while his clothes aren't fancy, he's clearly stepped it up for the occasion. He holds his forearms in front of his face, fists clenched, revealing that he is wearing a pair of handcuffs. They are imposing metal gauntlets around the wrists connected by both a chain and a thick cord.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - On GADSHILL. Same angle, but he has now thrust his arms below the frame. His brow furrows, but not intensely. More of a "one second. Where did I put those dang keys?" way.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 3 - On GADSHILL. He smiles wide and extends his now freed right hand to shake with Rouen's.

GADSHILL

Gadshill of the Eskapi. A real pleasure, Highmaster Rouen.

Panel 4 - Wide panel. GADSHILL enters and we get our first good look at the office. ROUEN is a few steps ahead and looks backwards at Gadshill, gesturing towards the open seat in front of his desk.

NOTE: Now that we have these two characters together, let's talk posture. Rouen has absolutely perfect, ramrod-straight posture. Gadshill slumps his shoulders a bit.

ROUEN

I have a bit of food available if you'd like to partake.

GADSHILL

Oh, no, I've never- I'm good, thank you.

ROUEN

But of course.

Please. Sit. Let us discuss.

Panel 5 - On ROUEN as he eases into his chair behind his desk.

ROUEN

Gadshill, I've seen many an Eskapi, but I was most impressed with your show last night. I bring you here to commission a command performance of a sort.

My pitch is exceedingly simple: you... become me. Then you escape it all.

PAGE 5 - (6 PANELS)

Panel 1 - On ROUEN, smiling. He leans back in his chair.

ROUEN

The job, the marriage, the social calendar... Everything.

And you can just take as long as you need as I certainly won't mind the time away. How does that sound?

Panel 2 - On GADSHILL, gobsmacked. He runs his fingers through his hair.

GADSHILL

Okay. Well. Wow.

That... Yes, that sounds fun.

Don't get me wrong, it sounds incredibly difficult, but it sounds like an excellent challenge.

Panel 3 - On GADSHILL. "No," but trying to be political.

GADSHILL

I just don't know if I can commit to something on that scale right now. I'd have to cancel performances, break contracts. I can't just--

Panel 4 - On ROUEN and GADSHILL. Things are getting a little more comfortable.

ROUEN

Oh, let's make it fun, yes? The quicker you escape, the more Khoin you shall receive.

Panel 5 - Closer on ROUEN's face. He smiles, knowing that this conversation is about to end when he says...

ROUEN

So, why don't we say that if it takes more than two weeks then only you and the next two generations of Gadshills will be able to retire forever.

Panel 6 - ROUEN and GADSHILL shake hands. Big smiles.

NO DIALOGUE

SCENE TWO: TESTING THE CUFFS

PAGE 6 - (5 PANELS)

Panel 1 - We are looking down at GADSHILL's vanity, backstage at the theater. On a cheap, tarnished silver tray we see a WEDDING BAND, as well as a PROSTHETIC NOSE and a HAIRPIECE, both made to match Rouen's features. An assortment of keys and picks are scattered around the tray.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - Wide panel. On GADSHILL, who is pressing either side of the nose prosthetic onto his face. His brow is furrowed as he looks straight ahead as though we are his mirror. Behind him, the dingy and dark dressing room.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 3 - Wide panel. Match cut. On GADSHILL who is now wearing Highmaster robes, the false nose, the hairpiece, and wedding ring, walking down a brightly lit hallway in The Institute.

At his right, ATHENA has her head down as she reads to Gadshill.

CAPTION

Day 1

ATHENA

... that's followed by a New Projects presentation from Iras at the Lab.

(Be sure to comment on their progress on the Varro Algorithm.)

Panel 4 - In the foreground, a trio of light teal HOLOGRAMS OF INSTITUTE SCIENTISTS politely listen. Before them, GADSHILL and ATHENA stand in a mostly empty Institute room. Gadshill wears a pair of large goggles attached to thick cord that connects to the ceiling. A holographic table with three, evenly-spaced technological gizmos stands before them.

The table and the scientists are projected from the ceiling and encounter some distortion.

GADSHILL

Gentlepeople, to all I've seen today:
"yes" and "very good."

(MORE)

GADSHILL (CONT'D)

However, the lack of reportage on our Varno Algorithm is both perceived and disappointing.

NOTE: Typo intentional.

ATHENA

The Highmaster thanks you for your updates. Sadly, we must leave for a Judge's confab.

Panel 5 - Overhead angle on ATHENA and GADSHILL as they stand in an ornate elevator that runs through the center of The Institute Prime.

ATHENA

I've moved your communiqué with Enforcement Division. Dr. Legate will be in your office upon arrival.

GADSHILL

Doctor. Yes. And this is because I always-

ATHENA

I detect some congestion, Highmaster.

You still have two meetings and a status report this afternoon, so we need you in top shape. Then...

PAGE 7 - (5 PANELS)

Panel 1 - Establishing shot of the Rouen Residence in the evening. We are in a slightly more residential area of Ordo, but still heavily populated. It's a sleek, newly built domicile with a little plant life in front.

CAPTION

"...you can finally rest up at home with Trudé."

Panel 2 - Wide. In a dimly lit dining room, GADSHILL, on the left, sits at one end of a massive table, opposite Rouen's wife, TRUDÉ on the right. She's in her mid-forties, has calm, heavy-lidded eyes, and long tresses that partially obscure her face.

Trudé has an array of distractions before her: both a large and a small screen, a heavy wrist brace that lights up, and an open book. Gadshill is leaning forward slightly, eyes intently focused on her, trying to get any kind of read.

Despite the full arrangement of utensils and flatware before them, neither eats, as there is no food. This is pure ritual.

GADSHILL

So.

A good day, I expect?

TRUDÉ

Mmmm.

Panel 3 - GADSHILL and TRUDÉ sit in elegant chairs, in the living room, side-by-side. Trudé looks away from him, still transfixed by the large screen. She holds the book open with one hand and is touching a third, smaller screen with the other.

Gadshill's chin is propped on a fist as he continues to peer at her.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 4 - In the foreground, at one end of a hallway we see TRUDÉ entering a doorway. Deep in the background, GADSHILL stands near another door, still doing his intent stare after her.

TRUDÉ

Goodnight.

Panel 5 - On GADSHILL. He sits alone in the dark on a luxuriously large bed, hand atop his head, still staring straight ahead. "What the fuck was that?"

NO DIALOGUE

SCENE THREE: THE REPORT

PAGE 8 - (4 PANELS)

Panel 1 - On GADSHILL. It is late afternoon and he is behind his desk in Rouen's office.

CAPTION

Day 6

COMPUTER

Private communiqué for Philippi Rouen,
marked "PR."

GADSHILL

Yes. Accept.

Panel 2 - Large panel. ROUEN is outside, all smiles, lounging in the sun. He wears a pair of triangular sunglasses to match his casual attire that reveals much of his extremely hairy chest. He has gotten some color in the sun and holds an elaborate cocktail that gets lower in the glass each time we see it.

The resort is bright and tropical; everything the Institute is not. Reminiscent of the restaurant from "Sisterhood." A small HOLOGRAM GADSHILL stands in the foreground.

ROUEN

Six days, Gadshill! Six!

I'm concerned I might start to become
bored with being bored.

Panel 3 - Closer. On ROUEN who sips from his drink, smirking.

ROUEN

Now, give us some stories about how
the Eskapi has yet to escape.

GADSHILL

(off-panel)

Well, I'm still testing the cuffs.

Panel 4 - WIDE. At night, in residential Ordo. In the foreground, GADSHILL, in pajamas, is running as fast as he can, panic on his face. Behind him, four INSTITUTE GUARDS race after him. They wear refined, dark, tactical outfits with asymmetrical cloaks. One is directly behind him, reaching.

CAPTION

"Turns out we're-- you're important enough that even midnight strolls have to be chaperoned."

PAGE 9 - (4 PANELS)

Panel 1 - Looking down at GADSHILL, underground, crouched on his knees in sludge, holding his hands up in surrender. No wedding ring. Behind him, a dark tunnel. He is surrounded by barred walls on every other side. Above him, in silhouette, we see the weapons of TWO INSTITUTE SECURITY guards trained on him.

CAPTION

"I found out the hard way that the Institute sewers are fortified.

"(You found your missing commitment band, if anyone asks.)"

Panel 2 - WIDE. GADSHILL stands in his bedroom in the Rouen Residence, frustrated. His right palm is splayed against the large window, pushing in vain. His left hand clutches one end of a makeshift rope, made from tied together bedsheets; the other end is tied to the leg of the bed. In the background, his bed is completely stripped.

CAPTION

"And I learned that your windows are just for looking through."

Panel 3 - On ROUEN, laughing uproariously.

ROUEN

HA HA HA! Well, the Institute's windows will open for you, but you'll require several more bedclothes.

Mercy!

Panel 4 - On ROUEN and, in the foreground, HOLOGRAM GADSHILL. Rouen leans back and closes his eyes. Gadshill looks smug.

ROUEN

So my friend, I'm sorry to report I'm downgrading you from "monumental" to simply "vast amounts of Khoïn" upon completion.

GADSHILL

Oh, don't worry, Rouen...

SCENE FOUR: GALA KIDNAPPING

PAGE 10 - (4 PANELS)

Panel 1 - WIDE. A big panel. We're at a fancy gala, held on the top floor of Institute Prime. Large, circular windows overlook Ordo at sunset. Several groups of GUESTS have clustered off, but at the center stands GADSHILL.

Gadshill wears a more muted robe and stole than at work, now with matching cravat. Behind him stands ATHENA, wearing elegant business attire, still holding her glowing tablet. She allows herself a glass of wine, but still listens attentively to Gadshill's conversation. On the fringes stands TRUDÉ.

CAPTION

"...I can still do monumental."

Day 9

GADSHILL

...but then, and I vow every word is the truth: he kept speaking to us!

Panel 2 - On GADSHILL. He holds a stem-less glass of wine near his face, about to sip. He's completely at home here.

GADSHILL

So I told him that if I sought to hear his opinions so incessantly, I would have seen him appointed as a Judge at The Institute North!

HIGHMASTERS

(off panel)

HA HA HA HA!

Panel 3 - In the foreground, silhouettes of two extended arms holding laser rifles firing into the air. In the background, the partygoers turn in shock.

NOTE: These rifles should seem worn and a little out of date. Perhaps a bit clunkier than your standard 3W3M laser rifle.

SFX

ZZZAKKKKKK! ZZZAKKKKKK!

Panel 4 - BIG PANEL. At the main entrance of the gala, a few GUESTS cower and make space as THREE KIDNAPPERS enter and scan the room. They all wear angular domino masks and slightly mismatched, all-black outfits. They are:

SAYE, at left, is in her 40s. She's short, strong, and imposing and holds a rifle in front of her with both hands. In the middle, CASCA, is thin and in her 30s. OSRIC, at right, rests a recently fired rifle on his shoulder, looking off panel. He is in his late 60s, but still in good shape for his age.

NOTE: These are the same Eskapi seen in the background of Gadshill's dressing room in Scene One.

OSRIC

PHILIPPI ROUEN!

PAGE 11 - (4 PANELS)

Panel 1 - A group of party guests cower and avert their gazes. Among them, GADSHILL begins to stand and lifts his hand. His posture and expression says, "Oh, I guess that's me..."

GADSHILL

I am he.

Panel 2 - Looking at CASCA and SAYE from OSRIC'S position as they flank GADSHILL and begin to walk. CASCA puts a hand on Gadshill's back as he tries to remain stoic.

GADSHILL

Cool heads, all. Let's give them no reason for conflict.

SAYE

Move faster and shut up, Highmaster.

Panel 3 - WIDE SHOT. In the hallway outside the gala, OSRIC leads the way as CASCA and SAYE pull a frightened GADSHILL. In the distance, a few curious gala ATTENDEES watch timidly by the entrance.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 4 - Closer on the group still moving in a different portion of hallway. GADSHILL now runs freely beside CASCA and SAYE. He speaks through gritted teeth and tilts his head towards his left to subtly indicate.

GADSHILL

(small)
Left here.

PAGE 12 - (5 PANELS)

Panel 1 - Closer on GADSHILL and OSRIC who are now at the front of the group in a stairwell designed for industrial use. Behind them, CASCA uses a railing to vault down the stairs. SAYE looks up and points her rifle at the floor above.

GADSHILL

Hold at the next corner, Osrlic.
Security station isn't far.

Panel 2 - On all four of them, backs against the wall. Beyond this wall we see the building's glass, half-circle first floor entrance.

OSRIC holds the rifle ready as he looks around the corner. GADSHILL's head is tilted towards the ceiling, eyes closed. "We're almost there."

OSRIC

Okay, then! I think that we are clear.

GADSHILL

One last twist of the pick and the lock is open.

SAYE

Same old Gad wasting time picking when we just broke the chain!

Outside, everybody!

Panel 3 - Outside. The four of them have slowed to a jog. OSRIC, CASCA and SAYE have big smiles on their faces. GADSHILL'S expression indicates his guard is still up. In the background we see the imposing front of Institute Prime. Casca points forward.

CASCA

That one there is us, Gad.

Panel 4 - GADSHILL takes a big step up into the opening of a large, cylindrical vehicle. It's a six-seater; the Ordo-equivalent of a rusted out, anonymous van with no windows.

On the ground, OSRIC offers an arm to help GADSHILL in while CASCA and SAYE look out, standing alert.

OSRIC

So, keep yourself strapped in tight, yeah?

(MORE)

OSRIC (CONT'D)

There are more Eskapi up ahead to keep
the route clear, so we're going to--

Panel 5 - On GADSHILL. Complete shock. Blood has splattered
on his face. His face is lit by laser fire in the evening
dusk.

SFX

ZZZAKKKK!

PAGE 13 - (4 PANELS)

Panel 1 - Looking down, from GADSHILL's perspective, OSRIC's
lifeless body is slumped against the vehicle, a blood streak
marking his descent. The rifle has fallen out of his hand,
into the street.

GADSHILL

(off panel)

No! Everyone! Look ou-

Panel 2 - On SAYE. She's in a crouching position, arms flexed
and spread wide, as she is hit in the chest, leaning into the
laser blast. Her rifle flies from her hands.

SFX

ZZZAKKKK!

SAYE

HURGH!

Panel 3 - On CASCA. She spins backwards, off her feet, as she
is hit in the head by a laser blast. There is a ballerina-
like quality to her pose.

SFX

ZZZAKKKK!

Panel 4 - BIGGER PANEL. GADSHILL stands outside the
transport, looking towards the ground at the bodies of his
three accomplices. It is not an incredibly gory scene, but
some blood has begun to pool from each of them.

SIX INSTITUTE SECURITY OFFICERS form a semi-circle across the
bottom of the image. They all have weapons drawn and look in
different directions, sweeping the area.

GADSHILL is fighting the sadness of this moment, attempting
to return to full Rouen.

GADSHILL

Thank you, boys. Excellent work.

As always.

SCENE FIVE: NUDE MEETING

PAGE 14 - (6 PANELS)

Panel 1 - In an Institute Prime conference room, a handful of INSTITUTE EMPLOYEES are hard at work. Strewn before them there are a number of glowing tablets, styluses, clipboards and pages. The room is nice, but a downgrade from Rouen's office. If the Institute were a law firm, this is a meeting of paralegals and associates rather than the partners.

CAPTION

Day 25

EMPLOYEE 1

No, so, I get that, but if we're going to eventually need approval on this, we...

Panel 2 - Wide, on half of the table. The EMPLOYEES stare straight ahead, shocked, refusing to look behind them as GADSHILL walks the length of the room completely nude. His expression makes him seem agitated and a little unhinged.

We see him at three points in the panel as he walks from left to right. His genitals are covered strategically by (1) a tablet being held by an employee, (2) an employee's hand being held up in an incredulous "we're all seeing this?" way, and finally (3) the doorframe as Gadshill exits.

GADSHILL

The Great Hall is mouldering! Beware the archivist that fails to document the self!

The No-Machines move towards understanding as the Known retreat!

I am the Nutrados! Gorge! Gorge!

Panel 3 - Alone again, the EMPLOYEES at the table sit in stunned silence before...

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 4 - Wide. The EMPLOYEES explode into cheers and delight. EMPLOYEE 3 on the right begins to disrobe.

EMPLOYEE 1

Loved that! Right? I loved that?

EMPLOYEE 2

You just don't see candor like that around here.

EMPLOYEE 3

Should we all? I mean, do we-

Panel 5 - On ROUEN, lit by the light from the communication hologram, laughing. Not as hard as in Scene 3, but still enjoying it. We are in a dark sleeping chamber, at night. From what we can see, this seems to be a room for the budget conscious. It is sparsely appointed and what is there does not seem fancy.

ROUEN

And they're calling it "Amnesty Day!"
Oh my. That is absolutely rich!

Panel 6 - On ROUEN. Starting to get serious.

ROUEN

Oh, dear. Very good, Gadshill. Very
good.

Now. We've had an enormous amount of
fun this month, but...

SCENE SIX: THE WAY OUT

PAGE 15 - (5 PANELS)

Panel 1 - Morning in Rouen's office at The Institute. On GADSHILL as he stares at the Ordo skyline through one of his massive, circular windows.

CAPTION

"Do finish this. Now."

CAPTION

Day 47

ATHENA

(off panel)

...and then following the clothed session, the Highmaster Council wanted to see...

Panel 2 - On GADSHILL, seated behind his desk, chin down, staring into the middle distance. It's clear his mind is somewhere completely different.

GADSHILL

Athena?

ATHENA

Yes, sir?

Panel 3 - On ATHENA standing before him, her tablet poised. She's remaining stoic, but there's a hint of concern in her eyes.

GADSHILL

Dismissed for two hours.

ATHENA

Yes, sir.

Panel 4 - On GADSHILL, still expressionless. He stands behind his desk and hunches over as he dashes off a note.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 5 - BIG PANEL. In the foreground, we see the note Gadshill just wrote propped up on the desk, folded neatly and labeled "TRUDÉ."

In the background we see GADSHILL. He has opened a section of one of the massive office windows and stands in its frame.

His hands hold the edges of the frame and one leg is extended straight out.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE 16 - (5 PANELS)

Panel 1 - GADSHILL'S perspective. We are incredibly high up. The front of The Institute Prime is now along the bottom of the panel, stretching forward until it meets the ground off in the distance. He is falling-- fast.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - Still GADSHILL'S perspective. He is now very close to the ground, and his arms are extended in front of him.

In his path, a large vehicle, like the one we saw on pg. 1, has pulled up.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 3 - ALL BLACK.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 4 - Still from GADSHILL's perspective, but we are now looking up at an austere, hospital room ceiling with a number of slings and suspension cables extending upward towards a central vanishing point.

NOTE: If you wanted to give this a "waking up" effect with an iris-shaped frame, blur, double-image or other, go for it. Whatever would you think best compliments your composition.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 5 - BIG PANEL. GADSHILL lays in a hospital bed, his body bandaged in layers of gauze, casts, suspended slings, and medical machinery. Enough of him is visible so that it's clear that it's our Gadshill, but otherwise his body has been decimated by the fall. His eyes indicate surprise at his new surroundings.

The hospital room is a top-of-the-line, high-tech room, suitable for Gadshill's stature, like the one seen in the last scene of "The Job."

Next to his bed we see the bottom half of TRUDÉ, sitting in a chair, curled up in a cheap-looking blanket.

CAPTION

Day 51

PAGE 17 - (6 PANELS)

NOTE: On this page there are three panels interspersed that continue the action from the previous page, all set at night, interrupted by flashes forward, all in the daytime. If you would like to play with panel border colors or anything else to distinguish them, please do! I'm indicating those panels with an opening [Day 51] for your ease.

Panel 1 - [Day 51] In the foreground, TRUDÉ is asleep at GADSHILL's bedside, disheveled. One arm clutches the note he left for her before jumping. Her other hand dangles towards Gadshill's bed.

In the background, GADSHILL has turned his neck to see her.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - DOCTOR LEGATE, a woman in glasses and lab coat, stands next to a ROBOT NURSE at GADSHILL's bedside. The nurse is projecting an outline of a human body, which is mostly in red.

CAPTION

Day 52

DOCTOR

...not good, but I don't want you to worry, Highmaster. There truly isn't anywhere in the solsystemo where you could receive better care.

Panel 3 - Projected in the foreground by a ROBOT NURSE are two side-by-side images: GADSHILL's original nose in profile, without any prosthetics, and ROUEN's nose.

In the background, the DOCTOR leans in closely to GADSHILL's ear. He is submerged in a tank of liquid up to his neck, evoking the escape on page 2. He is connected to many wires and four robotic arms, also in the tank, each of which grip and manipulate one of his limbs.

CAPTION

Day 55

DOCTOR

...the bone crumpled in a fascinating way, but can easily be restored.
(smaller)
We can also do something for the hair loss if you'd like, Highmaster...

Panel 4 - [Day 51] CLOSE UP on THE NOTE in Trudé's hand. In the background we see GADSHILL, still in bed, noticing it.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 5 - Wide. Looking down on GADSHILL, inside a hospital room, crumpled on the floor, who hangs his head in frustration. Two crutches are splayed out on either side of him. TRUDÉ kneels next to him with her arms on each of his shoulders, reassuringly.

CAPTION

Day 64

TRUDÉ

Take your time, love.

There's nothing Athena can't handle at
The Institute. And...

Panel 6 - [Day 51] Close up on TRUDÉ's free hand and GADSHILL's battered right hand, which has strained to reach out and clasps her fingers.

CAPTION

"I'm not going anywhere."

SCENE SEVEN: CLOSING ACTS

PAGE 18 - (4 PANELS)

Panel 1 - The foyer of the Rouen Residence, evening. GADSHILL lifts his chin and makes a pouty face in the mirror as he adjusts his cravat. He is healed once again and is fully indistinguishable from Rouen.

CAPTION

Day 73

COMPUTER

Private communiqué for Philippi Rouen,
marked "PR."

GADSHILL

Go. Low volume.

Panel 2 - On small, tabletop ROUEN HOLOGRAM. He is in BAD SHAPE. He looks completely disheveled, unhealthy, and crazed.

ROUEN

Thank goodness. So, I am outside at
present. I attempted to enter but the
secur--

--my security is preventing that.

Panel 3 - On ROUEN HOLOGRAM. "We've had a lot of fun here, right?"

ROUEN

Now, I recognize you haven't quite
completed your objective, but why
don't we agree to call this a failed
experiment and call it a day, yes?

No, not failed! A noble experiment.

Panel 4 - Downstairs. ROUEN glances over his shoulder at two INSTITUTE OFFICERS who keep their distance, but are watching him closely.

ROUEN

So, you will speak with these men
here, I'll make my way upstairs, and
we shall restore ourselves to our
natural states.

I'll make the situation plain to
Athena and the Highmasters. Trudé.

(MORE)

ROUEN (CONT'D)

And doesn't that just sound like the perfect closing to our little adventure?

PAGE 19 - (5 PANELS)

Panel 1 - Closer on ROUEN. He's in full desperation mode now.

ROUEN

If it's the money you're concerned about, fear not, Eskapi! Just name your price!

We'll call it a congratulatory tip for completing our little ruse, yes?

Panel 2 - In Rouen Residence. Close on GADSHILL's face, expressionless. He's giving Rouen nothing.

ROUEN

(off-panel)

Or perhaps something more permanent? A patronage residency? Ahhh, we shall fill your calendar with as many performances as you desire!

Panel 3 - Downstairs. ROUEN has snapped. His eyes are frantic. Any tether he had to his nobility is gone.

ROUEN

I need you to understand that this must end immediately. I will not tolerate this any further!

Do you understand me?!

Panel 4 - On GADSHILL, looking down with disdain at the small HOLOGRAM before him. Ice cold.

GADSHILL

I am, of course, terribly sorry. My wife and I are just about to take our leave for the evening.

Shall we try this again tomorrow?

Panel 5 - On the ROUEN HOLOGRAM blinking out of existence. At right, GADSHILL's hand presses a button.

ROUEN

Gadshill, you can not-

SFX

Be-DOOP

PAGE 20 - (6 PANELS)

NOTE: As promised, here we return to the montage from PAGE 1, now revealing more.

Panel 1 - On GADSHILL as he reflects on the communication, mulling his options. We see now that he's not bored; he's pensive.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - Outside. GADSHILL is stepping into the vehicle, as before, but now we see his SECURITY TEAM a few paces behind, restraining a screaming ROUEN, desperately clawing to make it past them.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 3 - Wide. GADSHILL commands the party and tells an anecdote to several IMPORTANT-LOOKING GUESTS. We now see that he is holding hands with TRUDÉ, who is laughing along with them. She wears her hair up and looks on lovingly.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 4 - Morning in Rouen's Institute office. GADSHILL enters with determination on his face, ATHENA right behind him.

They have walked deeper into his office here than in the corresponding panel on Page One.

GADSHILL

There was a disturbance near my quarters last night. That man again.

ATHENA

Yes, sir. We've been tracking him since.

Panel 5 - GADSHILL, seated behind his desk, addresses ATHENA.

GADSHILL

Athena, let us execute that security project.

ATHENA

Yes, of course.

Panel 6 - Close up on GADSHILL. He sits back in his chair with a wry smile, satisfied.

NO DIALOGUE